

Devotional Studies No. 12

The Divine and Human Encounter

One encounters God by faith in His Son Jesus. With the coming of Jesus, God encountered humanity with all its sinfulness. John the Baptist and Jesus the Messiah came announcing the Good News of God's kingdom concerning the forgiveness of sins. In the Law of God, one comes face-to-face with his or her sinfulness; that is to say, one's life lived in contradiction to God. Even though sinners cannot live without God, nevertheless, they live without fellowship with God and are under His wrath. Through one's encounter with God in and through Jesus, one is set free from God's wrath and comes under Divine grace. For one to have fellowship with God, one must accept His Son Jesus as the Way to the Father. For one to experience the Divine encounter with God, one can only experience this encounter through Jesus, not law. Even though Christians delight in God's Law, nevertheless, they rely upon Jesus for reconciliation with God, not law or tradition. Fellowship with God is not through law keeping, but through faith in Jesus. Faith in Jesus ends the legal relationship between God and humanity.

Just a casual reading of the Book of Romans reveals that that God broke through His own Law in order to bring about reconciliation. In other words, God broke the curse attached to the Law with His presence in Jesus as Atonement for the sins of humanity. When one accepts Jesus as his or her Atonement, the human "I" is dethroned and God is enthroned in one's life. With one's transference from the old aeon (Law) to the new aeon (grace), one receives the righteousness of God by faith in and through Jesus. One can refuse God's invitation or one can accept His grace. If one wishes to have a human encounter with God, one can only come to God through repentance and belief in His Son. In redemption, God does not annul the human will. In the Book of Revelation, one hears the familiar words of Jesus: "**Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me**" (**Revelation 3:20**). Again, John, too, writes in his Gospel about human initiative: "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (**John 1:12**).

When one accepts Jesus as Lord in one's life, this acceptance demands a radical change in one's behavior. The Gospel of God furthers one's obedience of repentance and faith in Jesus. In Christ, God wills that every person respond to His will with a "yes." In order to help men and women in their obedience, God imparts His Holy Spirit through repentance and faith in Jesus. Through one's repentance, one condemns the old person and, in actuality, puts off the old self. In other words, the old person dies and the new person lives in and through Jesus. It is in Jesus that God actually creates a new person. It

is in this vein that Paul writes: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ” (**2 Corinthians 5:17-18a**). In Christ, one receives from God a righteousness that is outside humanity, namely Christ. Paul removes all the underbrush—explanation—when he writes to the Corinthians in his first written correspondence concerning God’s wisdom in making Jesus one’s righteousness: “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (**1 Corinthians 1:30**). The Divine and human encounter is realized only in and through Jesus.

Jesus who reconciles humanity to the Divine usually is set on the back burner in many fellowships. Unfortunately today, many Christians are not focusing upon a Divine encounter with God through Jesus Christ. Numerous Christians concentrate more attention on tradition than on Jesus and Him crucified. The Christian community is divided, often times, into warring factions. These various divisions within God’s family result from a so-called faith in their orthodoxy of hand-me-down traditions from well-intentioned church fathers. One can state emphatically that faith in prevailing attitudes has never created a new person. Correct understanding of doctrines, right or wrong, does not bridge the gap between God and humanity. Many Christians, unconsciously, equate their understanding of God’s Word with the Word itself. Regrettably, orthodoxy does not recognize the distinction between the Word of God and one’s interpretation of God’s Word.

Just a casual review of the Book of Romans and the Book of First Corinthians reveals that the primary commission of the Christian community is not “rules and regulations,” but the proclamation of God’s Good News of salvation by grace through faith in His Son Jesus. This proclamation is about where and how the Divine and the human meet—the Divine and human encounter. God, in reaching out to men and women, did not deliver a course of lectures in dogmatic theology or submit a confession of faith or deliver a set of by-laws for redemption. One of the basic errors of many Christians is the overvaluation of their rites and beliefs. Scores of narrow sects disqualify the great body of Christians who refuse to subscribe to their narrow and fanatical teachings.

The real Revelation of God is in the Incarnation. It is and through Jesus that one experiences the Divine encounter with God. It is in the Incarnation (God becoming flesh) that one witnesses the entrance of God into the sphere of the lives of men and women. In the Incarnation, one observes the self-manifestation of God in His Son. What is faith? One can state categorically that faith is not doctrine (traditions of the church), but rather it is a personal encounter with God through Jesus. Faith involves trust, obedience, and love. If one wishes to understand God, one must turn to His Word, that is to say, His written Revelation called the Bible. From beginning to end, the Bible is a book that discloses God’s scheme of redemption for lost humanity. Do you wish to become a part of God’s elect, that is, the redeemed? If so, then cling to His Revelation in Jesus Christ—believe in Him. If one knows Him, one understands that he or she has eternal life.

If one wishes this Divine human encounter with the Creator of the universe, one must become a part of God’s elect through Jesus. Election of humanity is two fold. There is the Divine element and the human element. In other words, God’s Divine election takes place in Christ, but to become a part of God’s elect, one must respond to the

message of salvation by grace. What is preached today in many pulpits about election is simply the product of speculative thinking. God's election of individuals is not arbitrary, but rather, it is based upon one's acceptance of God's message of salvation in and through Christ. In the Epistle of Ephesians, Paul writes about this in great detail ([Ephesians 1:3-14](#)). Listen to Paul as he seeks to capture the core of how to become a part of God's elect:

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. ([1:13-14](#))

In conclusion, if one desires to enter this Divine human encounter, one must submit to baptism, which Jesus commanded. Baptism is not a work, but rather a gift from God. Yet, in one sense, baptism is more than just a gift to men and women, it is an active receiving and confession on the part of humanity of God's Way of salvation—the finished work of Christ upon Calvary. Baptism is not only an act of grace from God, but it is also an act of confession that God's Way of salvation is right. In some sense, it appears that in baptism, God acts and forgives sins and regenerates the one who confesses Jesus as Lord. In baptism, the one being immersed says "yes" to God, and God says "yes" to the one being baptized. Upon one's baptism, God adds one to His community, or church, upon earth. The church is simply a group of believing Christians saved by grace through faith in the atoning work of Christ upon the Cross. The church is a living fellowship—a fellowship made up of individuals saved by grace. Some people do not meet with God's people, but individualism (separation from the church) is just as foreign to the New Testament church as the idea of an institutional church. The church is not an organization, but an organism. Have you had an encounter with the Divine?